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ON THE OCCURRENCE OF *SIGANUS* (PISCES) ALONG THE COAST OF NORTH AFRICA

Fishes of the genus *Siganus* (Ord. Perciformes, fam. Siganidae) occur in the Indo-Pacific region and are among the most peculiar elements of its fauna. They are common in the Red Sea and after the opening of the Suez Canal immigrated into the Mediterranean. For many years *S. rivulatus* (Forssk.) has been known to exist along the Eastern shores, from Egypt to Anatolia. It was firstly recorded from Haifa, under the name *Teuthis sigana* (STEINITZ, 1927). This fish is now quite common and is found also near Cyprus and Rhodes.

More recently, a second species arrived: *S. luridus* (Rüppell). At present, the latter has been reported only from Israelian and Lebanese waters, but the former - as here is shown - has moved also westward, reaching Libya.

In June 1970 I visited the Mediterranean Marine Sorting Center (Khereddine, Tunisia) and I had there a welcome occasion for examining a number of fishes from North Africa (Morocco, Libya). Three *Siganus* had been collected at Tobruk (Eastern Libya: Cyrenaica) and the data are as follows:

a) Two specimens. Collector Clarke. 23 June 1968. Hook and line. Tobruk. 32° 04' 44" N, 23° 58' 53" E. 2 meters.

b) One specimen. Collector Norris. 24 June 1968. Hook and line. Tobruk. 32° 04' 49" N, 23° 58' 53" E. 2 meters.

Tobruk is about 770 km west of the Suez Canal (Port Said).

Only a very short description of these fishes is given here, just for pointing out their essential features. Standard length 93-125 mm.



Depth of body about 2,8 in standard length. 5+8 gill rakers. Dorsal rays XIV.10, anal VII.9, pectoral 17. Longest dorsal spine shorter than the distance from front of eye to posterior edge of opercle. Longest dorsal soft ray about equal to the length of the snout or a little less. Caudal forked. Colour (in formol) rather clear brownish with irregular dark spots and blotches on the body and the fins.

All these characters are well corresponding to those of *S. rivulatus* (Forssk.) as described and figured by BEN TUVIA (1964, p. 5, pl. I). This is a species having a more elongated body, an higher number of gill rakers and a lighter colour than *S. luridus*, that has a truncated caudal fin.

Siganids were not yet recorded from North Africa west of Egypt. Many years ago (1938), when I investigated the marine fauna near Tripoli, I did not see any *Siganus*. As the area where these fishes are settled seems presently to expand in a western direction, we can expect that they will soon appear also along farther shores.

The specimens from Tobruk have been kindly presented to the Museum of Genoa, where they are now preserved (MSNG 42.545). I feel greatly indebted to the authorities of MMSC for having been allowed to add *S. rivulatus* to the list of Libyan fishes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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RIASSUNTO

Siganus rivulatus fa parte dei pesci che da tempo sono penetrati dal mar Rosso nel Mediterraneo orientale. Esso si sta diffondendo anche lungo le coste dell'Africa del Nord. Si sono pescati alcuni individui a Tobruk (Libia: Cirenaica).

RÉSUMÉ

Siganus rivulatus est parmi les poissons qui depuis longtemps ont pénétré de la mer Rouge en Méditerranée orientale. Il est en train de se repandre près des côtes de l'Afrique du Nord. On a pêché quelques individus à Tobruk (Libye: Cyrénaïque).

